

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T ISLAMABAD 4351

EXDIS

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TAGS: PEPR, US, PK, AF

SUBJECT: GENERAL ZIA'S DESIRE TO MEET WITH PRESIDENT CARTER

REF: A) ISLAMABAD 4332, B) ISLAMABAD 4264

1. AS PART OF HIS CONVERSATION WITH ME ABOUT PAKISTAN'S CONCERNS FOLLOWING THE KABUL COUP (REF A), FOREIGN ADVISOR AGHA SHAHI (DE FACTO FOREIGN MINISTER) MADE A STRONG BID FOR A FACE-TO-FACE MEETING BETWEEN CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR GENERAL ZIA AND PRESIDENT CARTER.

2. HE SAID HE HAD RAISED POSSIBILITY OF GENERAL ZIA'S ATTENDANCE AT SSOD IN A MEDAUNG WITH SECRETARY VANCE ON FRINGES OF CENTO MINISTERIAL IN LONDON. HE HAD NOTED THAT THE GENERAL'S ADVISORS THINK IT WOULD BE GOOD FOR HIM TO ATTEND THE SSOD BUT THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER NOT TO GO TO NEW YORK IF HIS PRESENCE IN THE US COULD NOT ALSO RESULT IN A PERSONAL MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT.

3. SHAHI SAID HE HAD BEEN DISCOURAGED BY SECRETARY FROM PRESSING THIS POINT ON WELL KNOWN GROUNDS OF DIFFICULTIES IN PRESIDENTIAL SCHEDULING OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS.

SHAHI SAID HE ASKED SECRETARY IF US RELUCTANCE TO CONTEMPLATE A ZIA-CARTER MEETING WAS BASED ON PAKISTAN'S

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HAVING A MILITARY GOVERNMENT. SECRETARY, HE SAID, DISCLAIMED ANY RELUCTANCE ON THAT GROUND, CITING AGAIN THE PRESIDENT'S VERY TIGHT SCHEDULE.

4. THE "HISTORIC EVENTS" WHICH HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN AFGHANISTAN NOW MAKE IT "IMPERATIVE" FOR THERE TO BE RENEWED CONSIDERATION OF THE POSSIBILITY OF A MEETING

BETWEEN GENERAL ZIA AND THE PRESIDENT, SHAHI CONTINUED. ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THE PRESIDENT'S SCHEDULE FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS IS CORWDED, BUT NOTING ALSO THAT THE SSOD WILL DOUBTLESS GO ON FOR SOME TIME, HE WONDERED IF A WAY COULD BE FOUND FOR THE TWO MEN TO GET TOGETHER, IF

ONLY FOR A BRIEF LUNCH, AT A TIME CONVENIENT TO THE PRESIDENT. THE GOP WOULD THEN PLAN ZIA'S SFB D APPEARANCE ACCORDINGLY.

5. I GAVE NO ENCOURAGEMENT, BUT AGREED TO CONVEY THE GOP'S VIEWS TO THE DEPARTMENT FOR CONSIDERATION OF THE POSSIBILITY OF A MEETING WITH GENERAL ZIA.

6. COMMENT: I HAVE SEEN AND UNDERSTOOD THE INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING MEETINGS WITH THE PRESIDENT. HOWEVER, AS I HAVE NOTED ELSEWHERE (REFS A& B), A VERY SIGNIFICANT EVENT TO THE FUTURE OF THIS REGION HAS OCCURRED IN KABUL, AND I BELIEVE IT GIVES A NEW IMPORTANCE TO OUR CAREFUL HANDLING OF THE PAKS DURING THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. I WOULD REMIND THE DEPARTMENT, FOR INSTANCE, THAT REFUSAL IN 1965 OF A PREVIOUS PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES TO MEET THE URGENT DESIRE FOR A MEETING BY A FORMER MILITARY RULER OF PAKISTAN WAS A CONTRIBUTING ELEMENT IN THE SUBSEQUENT DETERIORATION OF REGIONAL RELATIONS IN SOUTH ASIA.

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7. I WOULD HOPE, THEREFORE, THAT BEFORE MAKING ANEGATIVE DECISION ON THIS REQUEST, WE CONSIDER POSSIBLE WAYS IN WHICH WE CAN BE RESPONSIVE TO CURRENT PAKISTANI ANXIETIES. THE PRESIDENTIAL LETTER TO GENERAL ZIA I HAVE PROPOSED IS, OF COURSE, ONE MEASURE WE SOULD TAKE IN THE SHORT TERM, WHETHER OR NOT IT CONTAINS SOME HINT OF THE POSSIBILITY OR DESIRABILITY OF A MEETING.

8. THE PRESIDENT'S OWN TRAVEL SCHEDULE MIGHT ALSO BE LOOKED TO AS A POSSIBLIE AID TO SUCH A MEETING; IF THE PRESIDENT IS PLANNING FOREIGN TRAVEL DURING THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, AN OPPORTUNITY FOR GENERAL ZIA TO MEET WITH HIM IN A THIRD COUNTRY MIGHT BE CONSIDERED. ALTERNATIVELY, IF THE PRESIDENT PLANS ANY LARGE DINNER OR RECEPTION IN NEW YORK IN CONNECTION WITH THE SSOD, THAT TOO COULD PROVIDE THE OCCASION FOR EVEN A TEN-MINUTE CHAT WHICH COULD BE BILLED AS A "PRIVATE MEETING" THAT WOULD GO A LONG WAY TOWARD SATISFYING THE PAKISTANIY THAT THEIR VERY REAL ANXIETIES HAVE BEEN HEARD SYMPATHETICALLY AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS IN THE UNITED STATES.

9. I STRONGLY URGE THAT EVEN IF A MEETING IN WASHINGTON

IS DEEMED IMPOSSIBLE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO
A MEETING IN A THIRD COUNTRY OR IN NEW YORK. HUMMEL

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